



## The Death and Life of Chinatowns

*Towards an Integrated and Authentic Transformation of 'Chinatown' in Amsterdam*

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Urbanism track, TU Delft

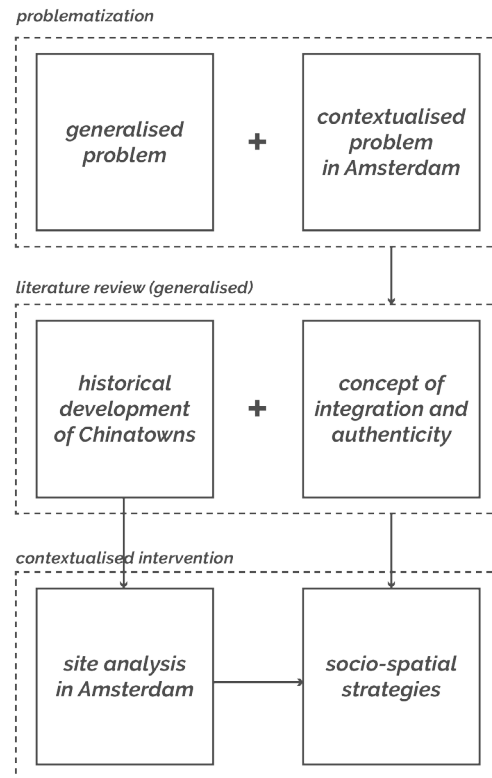
first mentor: Gregory Bracken

second mentor: Reinout Kleinhans

8th July, 2020



## CONTENT



*roadmap of presentation*

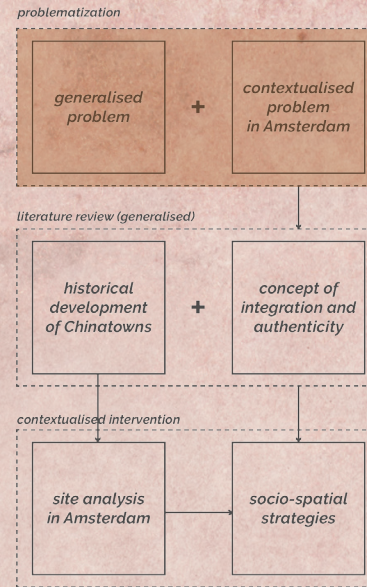
- Problematization  
Generalised problems  
Contextualised problems in Amsterdam

- Literature analysis  
Historical development  
Integration, Authenticity  
Socio-spatial Planning

- Contextualised intervention  
Site analysis in Amsterdam  
Socio-spatial strategies

- Conclusion  
Conclusion  
Transferability  
Discussion





## 01 Problematization



## Exotic and mysterious impression



*the image of Chinatown in New York City,  
source: reddit*



*movie poster of CHINATOWN  
source: <https://meansheets.com/>*



## Commodification and pastiche authenticity



*image of Chinatown in Amsterdam, the pagoda-like ornament on the facade of Chinese restaurant. Author, 2020.*



## Commodification and pastiche authenticity



*over-emphasize physical setting Chineseness through stereotypic elements*



*misunderstanding*



*cultural recognition*



*'authentic' Chinatowns 'decepted' by developers*



## Impacts of gentrification

The potential of this ethnic branding to reinforce the gentrification. (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005)



ethnic branding



gentrified



tenants from Vancouver's Chinatown protest the gentrification and chant in Chinese, English, Spanish and French. (source: Nat Lowe, the mainlander, 2019)



Impacts of gentrification



*the loss of local business owned by Chinese immigrants*



## Impacts of gentrification



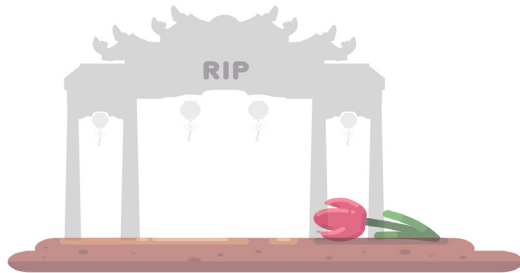
*up-graded and replaced by chain stores and fancy restaurants*

*left-right, Cuba restaurant, steakhouse, Subway, starbucks in Washington's Chinatown  
source: Google street view.*

## The decline of Chinatowns

"Some hypothesize that Chinatowns are on "on their way out" in that they are in a process of assimilating into the larger society or into the suburbs." (Wong, 2013)

"It is Chinatown 2.0 that is a more upmarket boutique landscape with just a light Asian flavour." (Rath, 2018)



### Magazine

## The slow decline of American Chinatowns

By Aidan Lewis  
BBC News, New York

🕒 4 February 2014



### Liverpool blues: the sad decline of Europe's oldest Chinatown

Popularity of Chinese neighbourhood appears to have passed its peak, but plans for a metal and glass upgrade have failed to get off the ground, despite enthusiasm from investors – many of them from Hong Kong



Hilary Clarke in London  
Published: 6:00pm, 1 Sep, 2018

Why you can trust SCMP

### METRO

## Chinatown slowly losing its charm — and its restaurants

By Steve Cuzzo

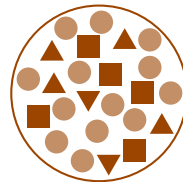
February 9, 2017 | 12:43am | Updated

screenshots of news about the decline of Chinatowns.  
(source-from up to down: BBC, SCMP, themainlander, NewYork Post)



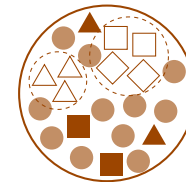
## Ethno-cultural models in European countries

*"Local entrepreneurs are not completely free actors; they are embedded in the political economy."  
(Rath, 2002).*



**Assimilation**

It means ignoring any ethnic characteristics they have, not treating them as a special group, and demanding that they adopt the norms and languages of the host societies. (Christiansen, 2003)

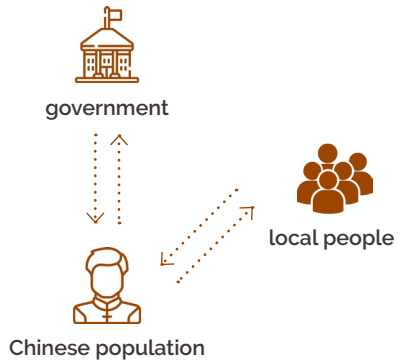


**Integration**

It means giving them a place in European societies as a distinct ethnic group, protect the ethnic groups from cultural dominance by the majority ethnic group (or host society) and respect and protect their ethnic 'core'. (Christiansen, 2003)

## Integration

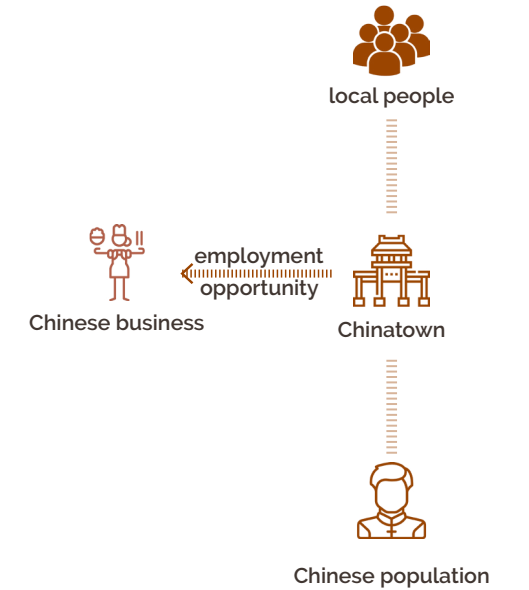
*"Integration is not a one-way process. Beside nations, civil societies also have the responsibility to accept immigrants". (ECRE, 1998; cited as Agers & Strange, 2008).*



	lots of contact natives, lots of contact origin group	lots of contact natives, little contact origin group	little contact natives, lots of contact origin group	little contact natives, little contact origin group
1 <sup>st</sup> generation migrated before 1990	18	14	34	34
1 <sup>st</sup> generation migrated 1990-1999	20	15	28	37
1 <sup>st</sup> generation migrated after 2000	33	7	40	21
2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	40	38	6	16
max.bao	13	8	39	40
vbo/mavo	22	15	34	28
mbo/havo/vwo	29	21	22	29
hbo/wo	38	22	23	18
total	27	17	28	27

*Chinese community: inward, closed and invisible*

*Degree of social contact with members of the ethnic origin group and with the native Dutch by generation and education, 2009 (in percentages). (source: SCP, 2009)*



role of Chinatown: communication platform



## 'In-between' Chinatown, Amsterdam

**assimilated**



*assimilated, few Chinese elements visually*

*image of Chinatown in Rotterdam.  
source: <https://www.azia-tische-ingredienten.nl/wah-nam-hong-rotterdam/>*



*not officially acknowledged, but distinct in a small cluster*

*image of Chinatown in Amsterdam. Author, 2020.*

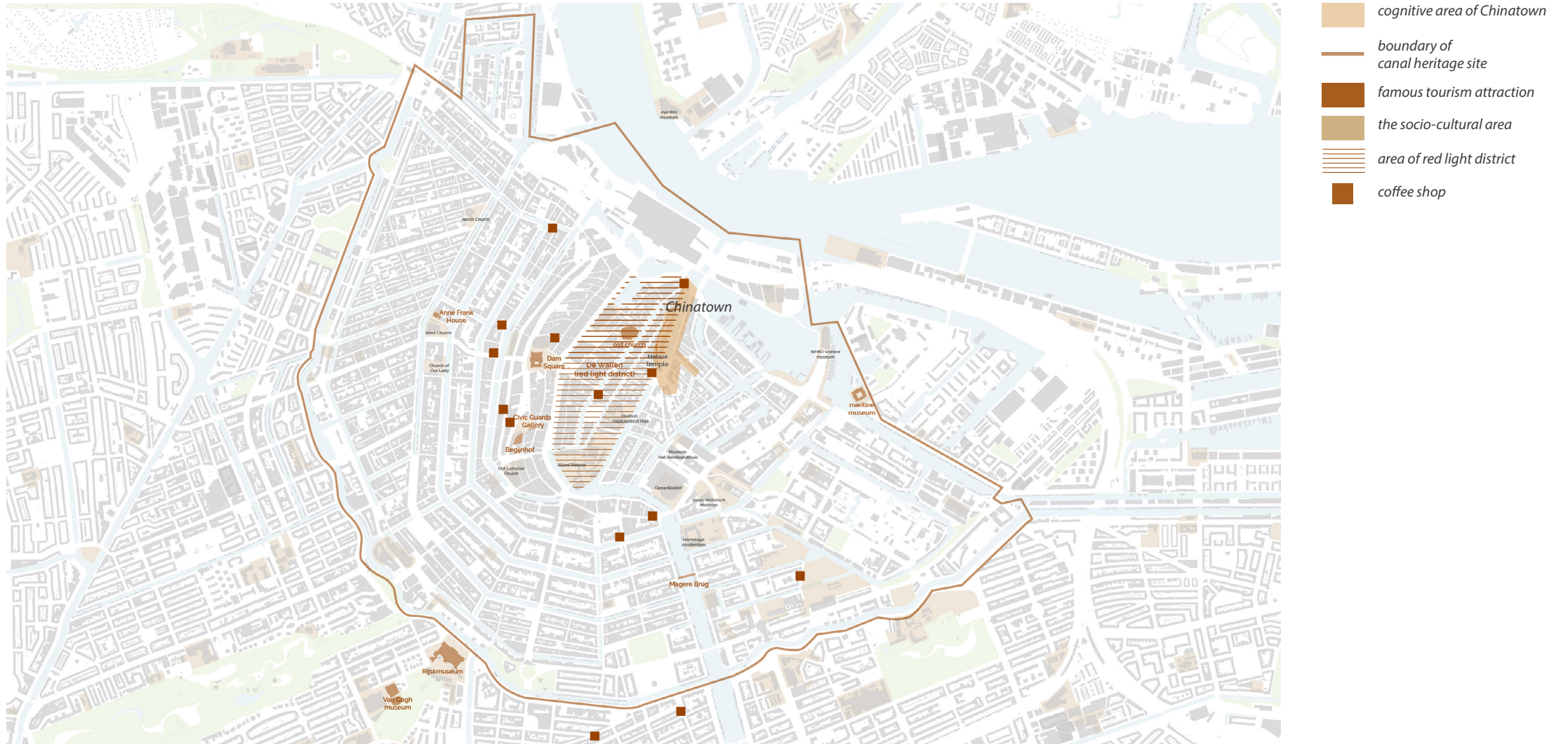
**integrated**



*officially acknowledged, distinct with certain boundary*

*the map of boundary and image of Chinatown in the Hague.  
(source: Wikipedia-Chinatown Den Haag)*

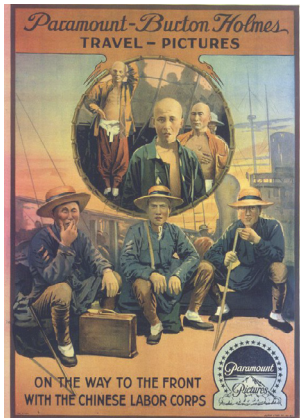
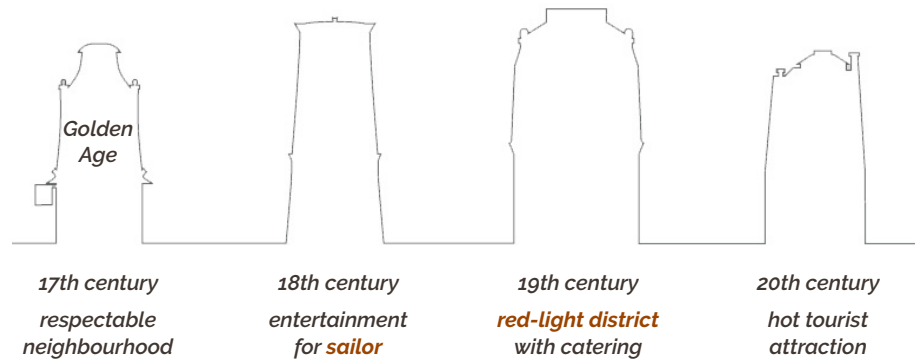
## The ethnic enclave in the city centre of Amsterdam



location of Chinatown in Amsterdam, and its surrounding. Author, 2020.



## History of Chinatown, Zeedijk



the gathering of Chinese seamen around dockland and formed Chinese quarters



linear illustration of canal housing. (source: NV. Zeedijk)

Poster of a now lost film on the British Chinese Labour Corps. (source: Paramount Pictures)

Hairdresser store 'East and West' in Amsterdam's Chinatown, Chan Ching Hing family, 1947. source: Sem Presser / MAI.

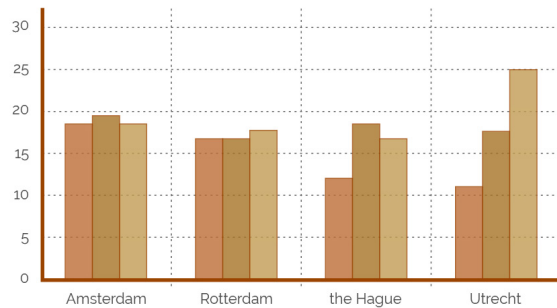
## State-led gentrification

### Market-led gentrification

Shop owners would transform their stores to satisfy their high-income consumers, with high-quality of goods and services.

### State-led gentrification

Local government as the main promotor to change the retail landscape to streets which have high proportion of social housing.



Immigrant entrepreneurs in wholesale, retail and restaurants as a share of the total number of immigrant entrepreneurs in the four largest Dutch cities, 1997. source: Based on Van Den Tillaart & Poutsma, 1998: 186; cited as Kloosterman et al., 2010

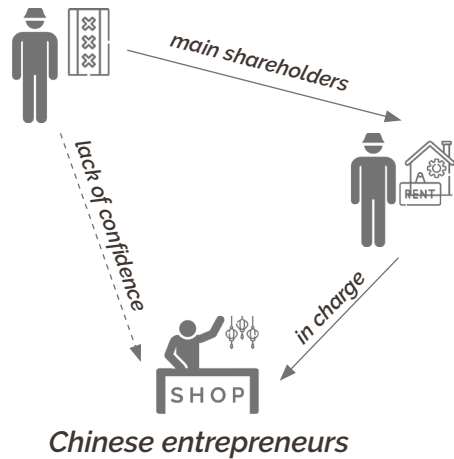


the map overlapped with property value and commercial streets, some streets are experiencing gentrification. Author, 2020.



## Selective acknowledgement

Local authorities thought their interventions were not detrimental for Chinatown, but this support was explicitly *confined to endeavours promoting a middle-class shopping experience*. (Rath et al., 2011),



public sector



local mangement



Municipality of Amsterdam

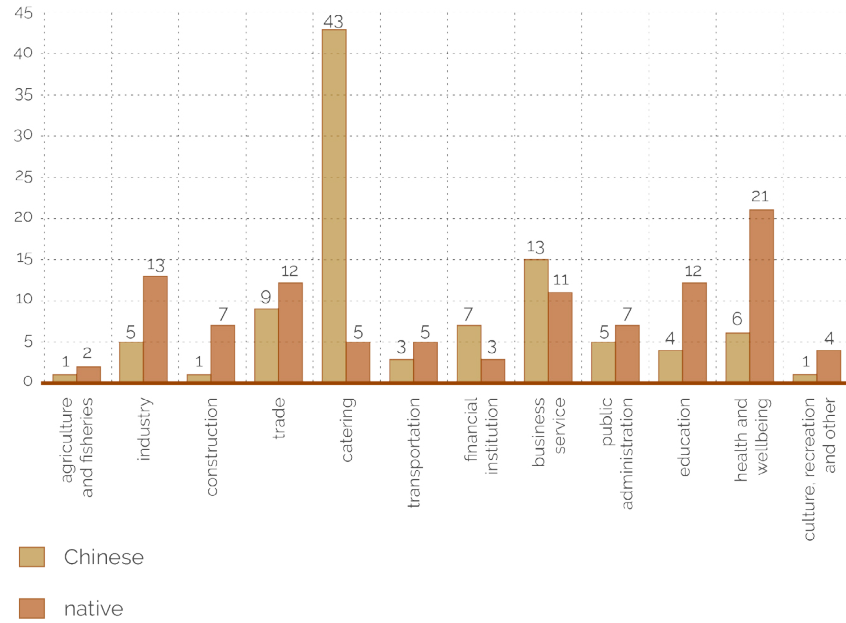
Project 1012: to restrict criminal practices and confine prostitution to a smaller area so as to *encourage the upgraded shopping and living environment* (Rath et al., 2011).



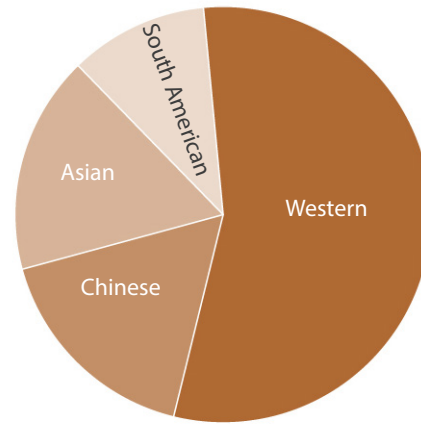
NV Zeedijk

Preference of stores: *Innovative concepts* that strengthen Chinatown, especially in the southern part of the Zeedijk and the Geldersekeade.

## The decrease of Chinese stores



Chinese and native Dutch employees by sector, a 2009 (in percentages)  
(source: SCP, 2009)



the proportion of each type of cuisine around Zeedijk. Author, 2020.

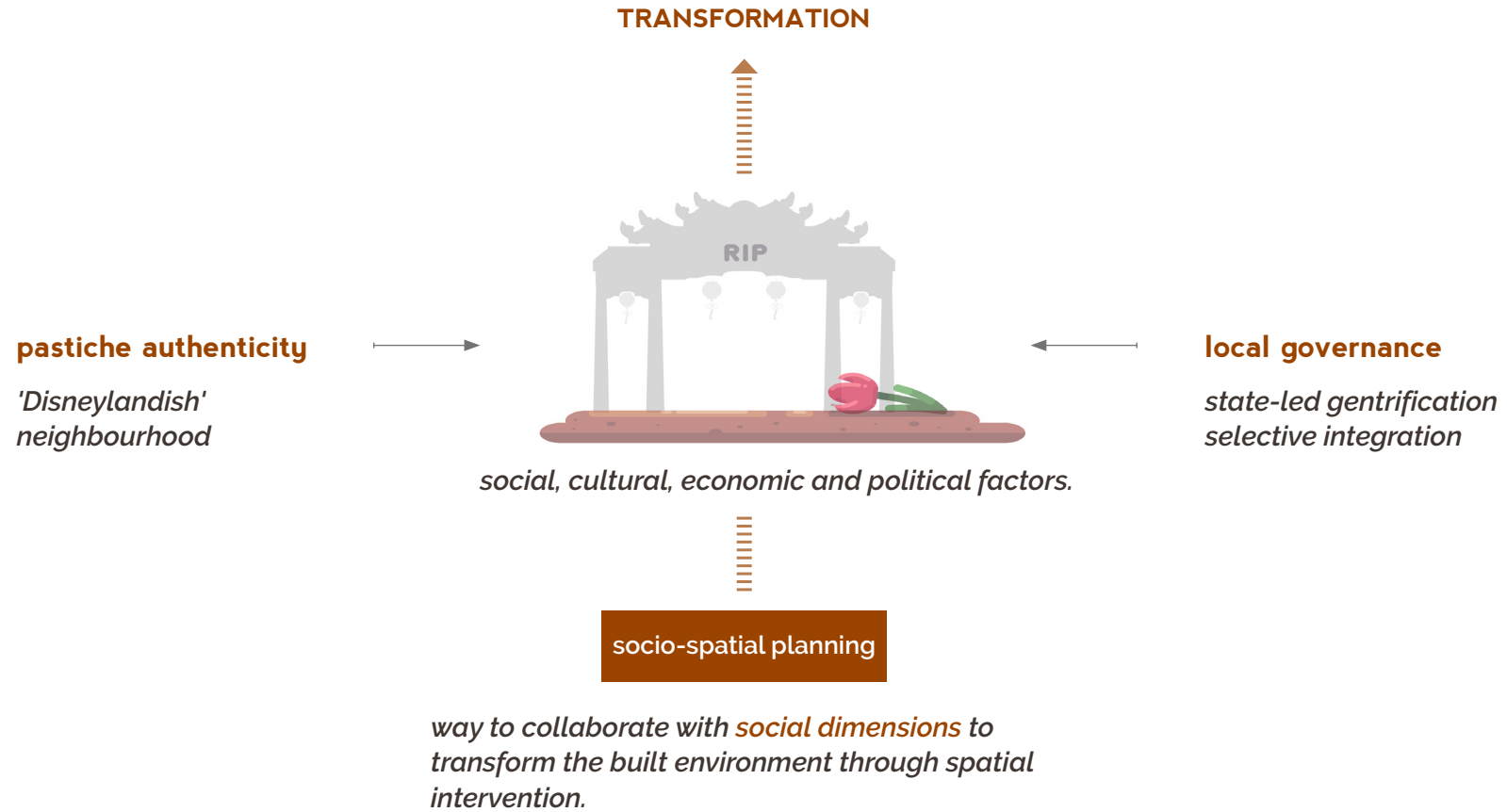
a. including Zeedijk, Stormsteeg, Nieuwmarkt, Geldersekade, and Binnen Bamtammerstraat (store information collected from Tripadvisor)  
b. Asian cuisine including Thai, Vietnam, Japanese, Indonesian and Indian.



distribution of Chinese stores around Zeedijk.



## Problem statements



## Research Questions

### Main Research Question

**How could socio-spatial planning help to guide an integrated and authentic transformation of Chinatown in Amsterdam under local contexts?**

### Sub-Research Questions

#### About previous transformation and definition

SQ-1. How did Chinatowns previously transform under the European contexts? What is the definition of Chinatown?

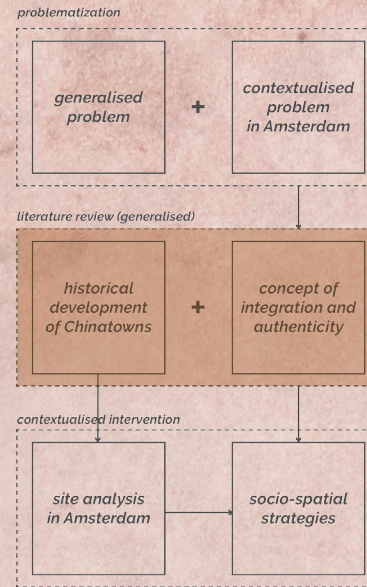
#### About the way of representation of ethnicity

SQ-2. What is the role for Zeedijk regarding city, local society and Chinese? How Chinatown in Amsterdam represent ethnic identities spatially? What are the differences compared with other Chinatowns?

#### About socio-spatial intervention

SQ-3. What are strategies and spatial interventions for socio-spatial planning that could be used to help an integrated and authentic transformation?





## 02 Literature review



# Historical development

1890s

marginalised ethnic settlement



1930s

entered the public life

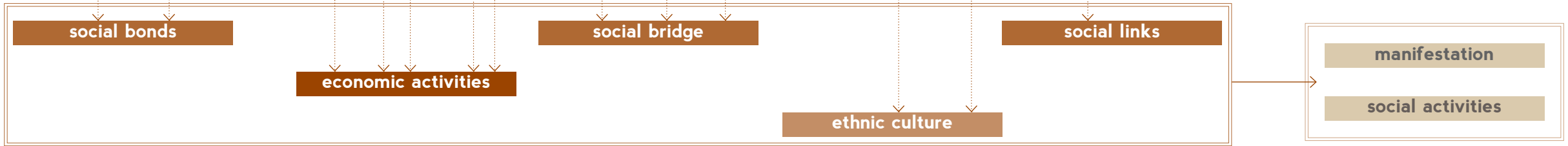


1980s

insitutionalised place for recreation



now



social dimensions

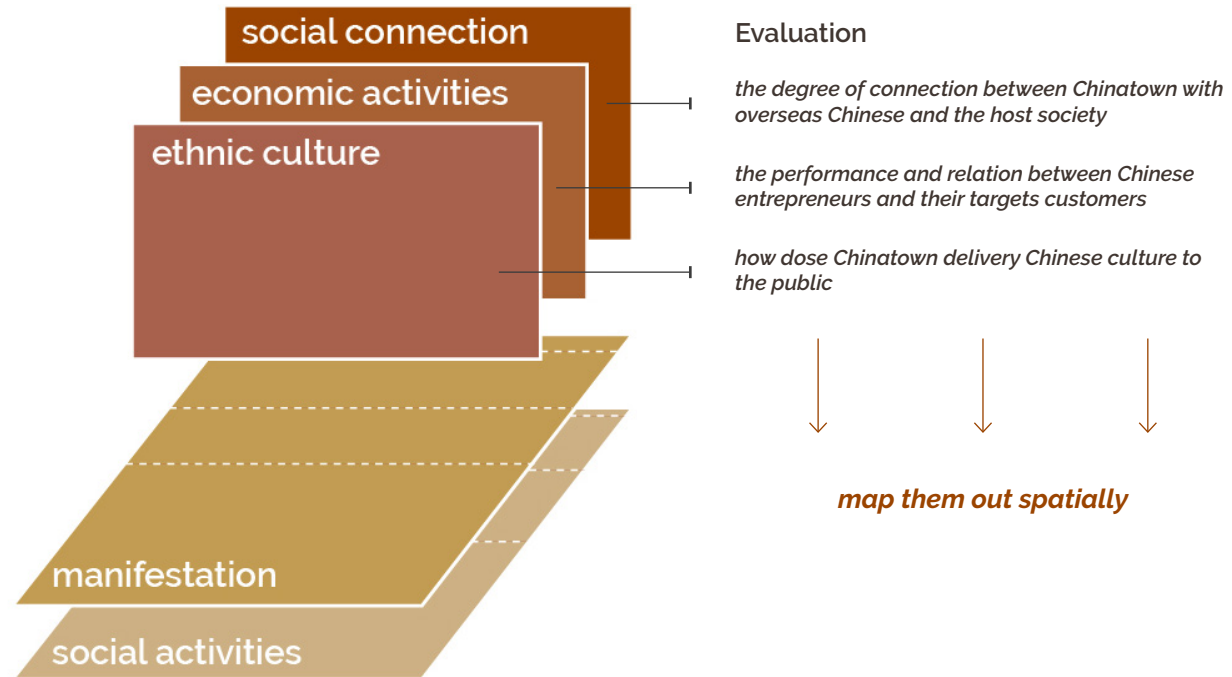
spatial dimensions



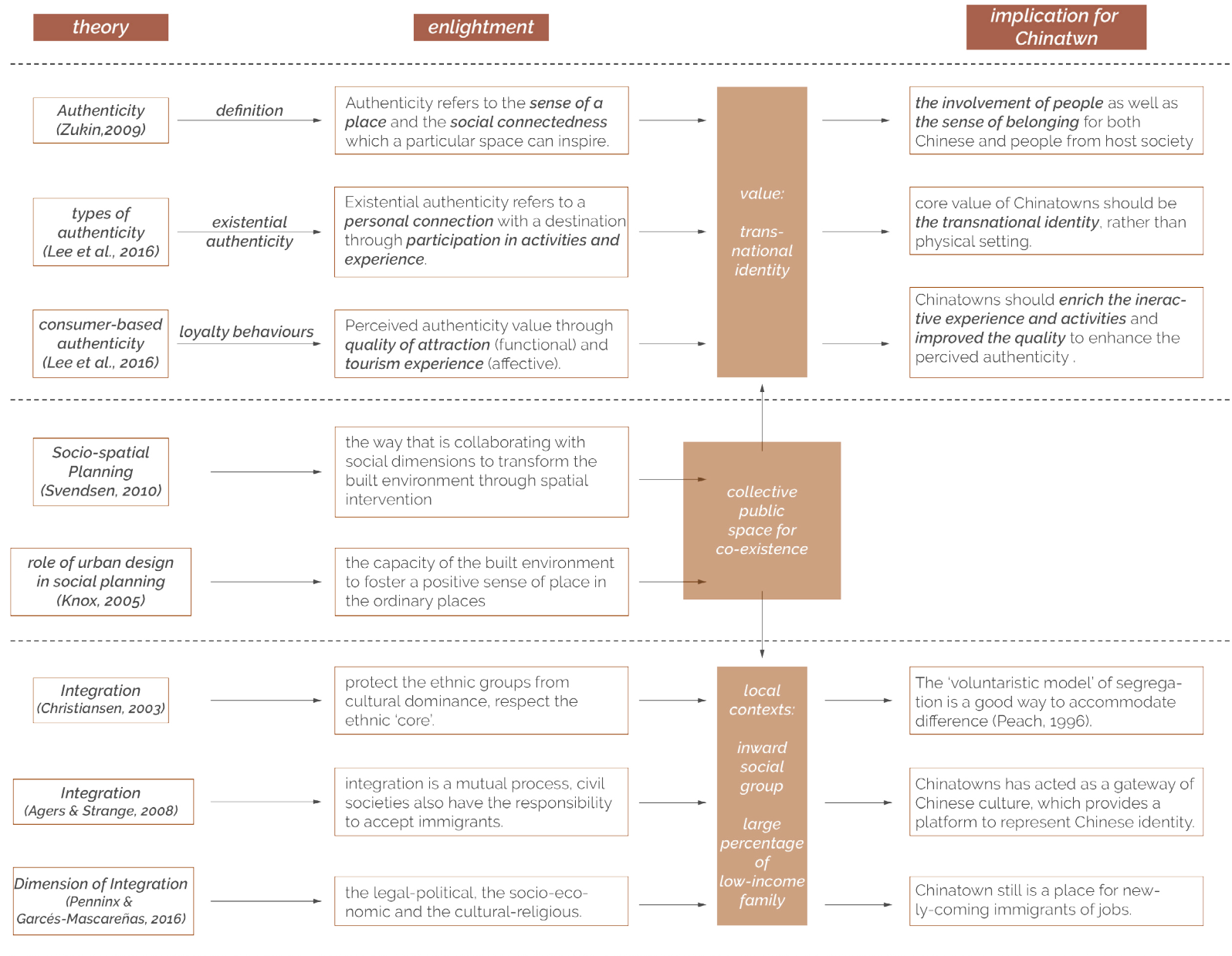
## Definition of Chinatown

### **Chinatown.**

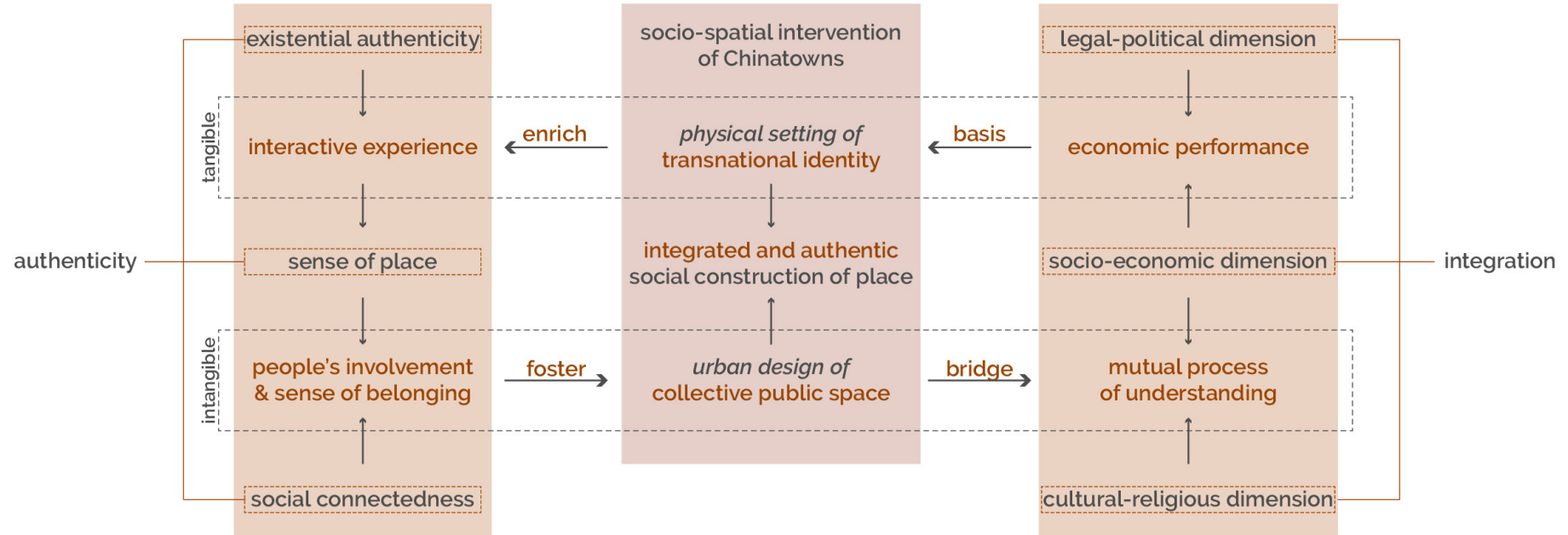
*Spatially, Chinatowns are the concentration of Chinese stores and activities (social activities) with visible Chinese elements (manifestation). In addition, three essential social dimensions composed Chinatowns to represent their ethnicity, ethnic culture, social connection and economic activities.*



# Theoretical framework

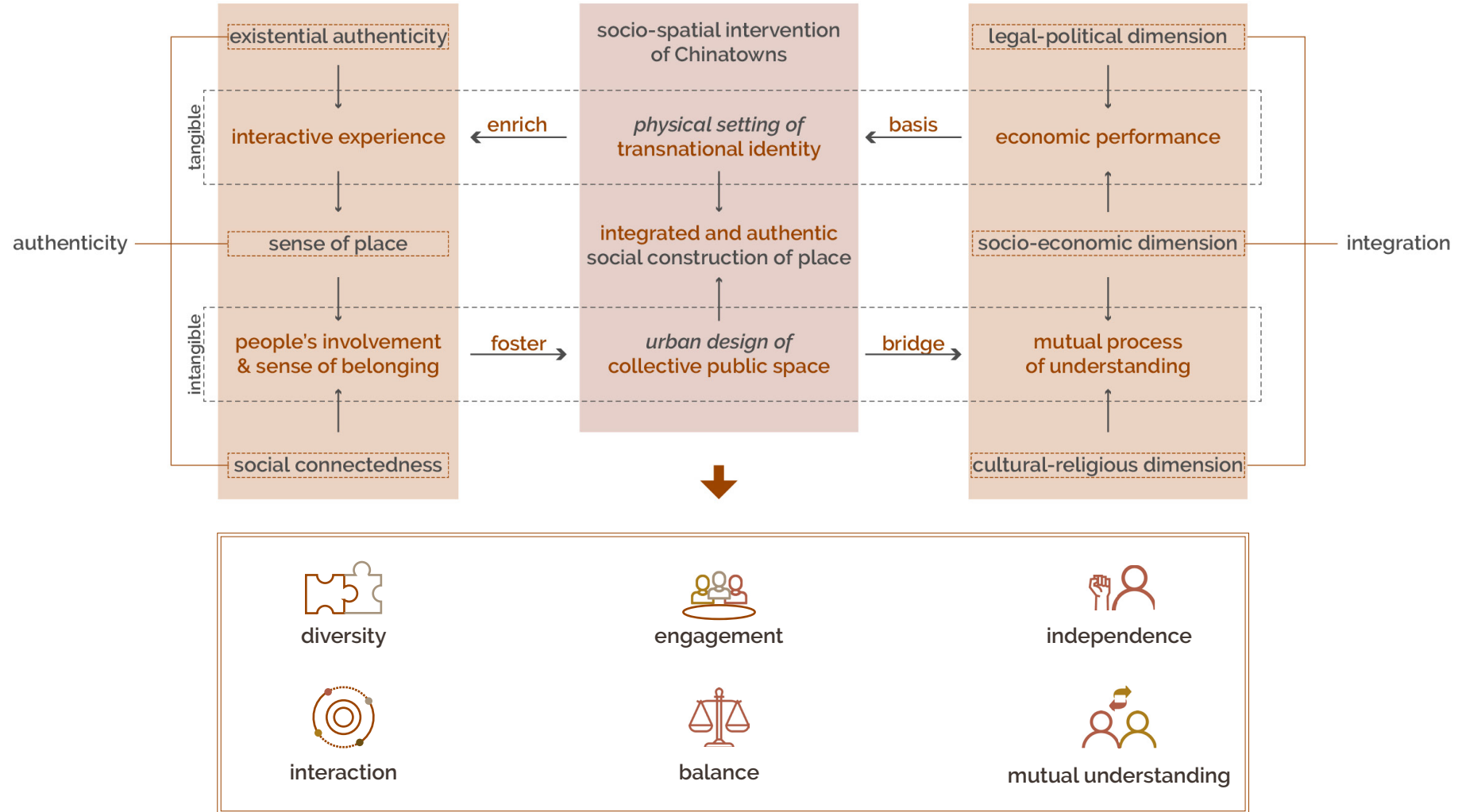


## Connector: between integration and authenticity

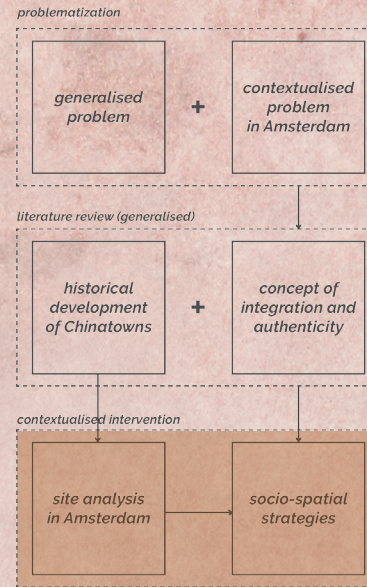




# Requirements



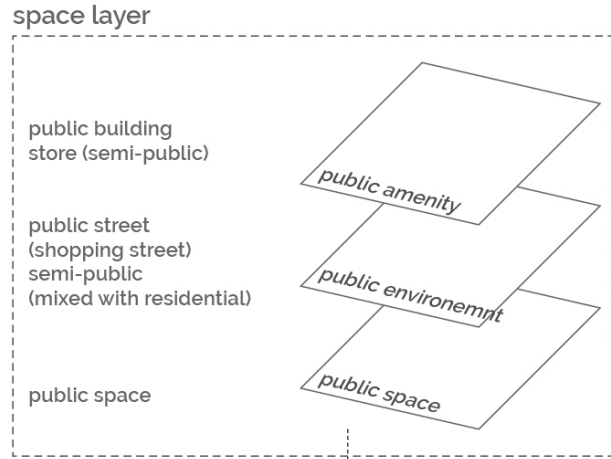




## 03 Contextualised intervention



## Space layer



based on Woodcraft et al., 2012

public building



public street: shopping street



public space



semi-public building: stores



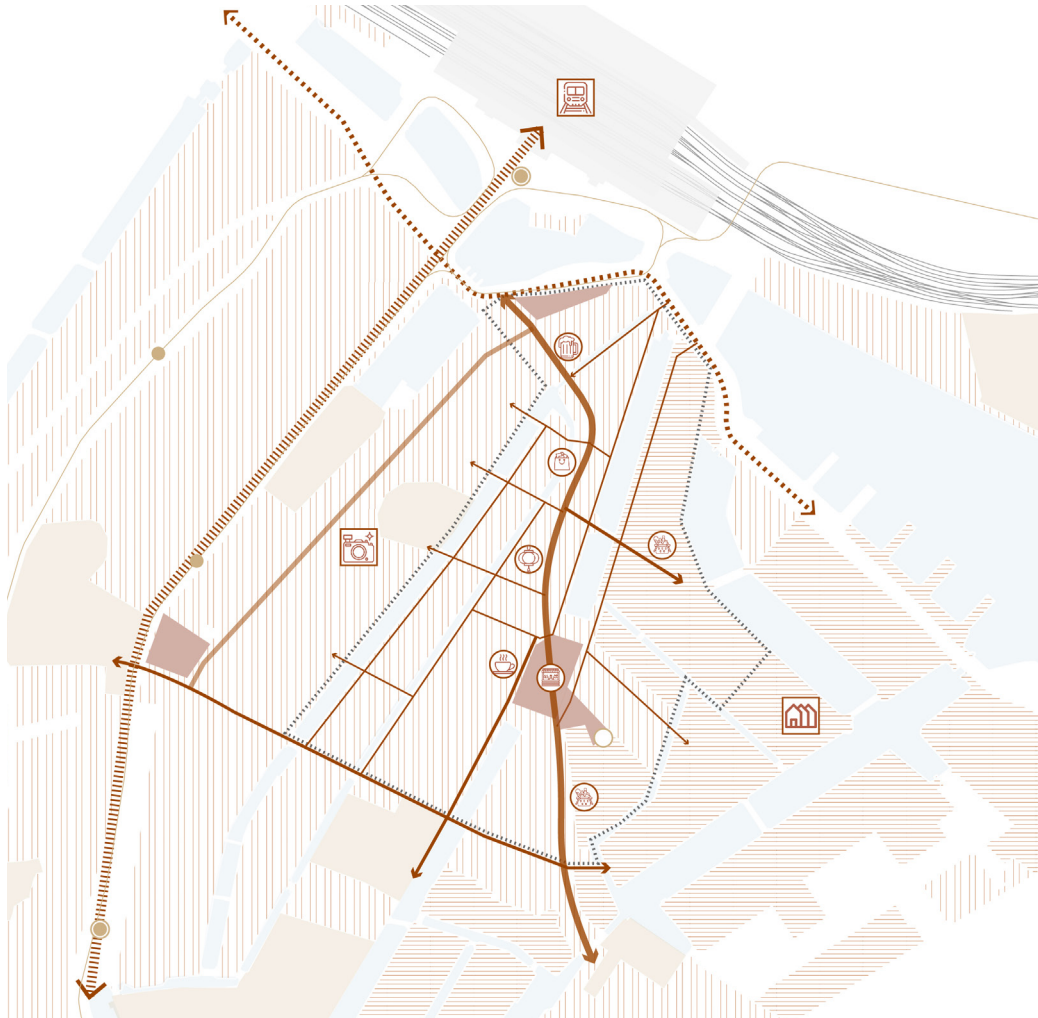
semi-public street: street mixed with residential and commercial at ground floor



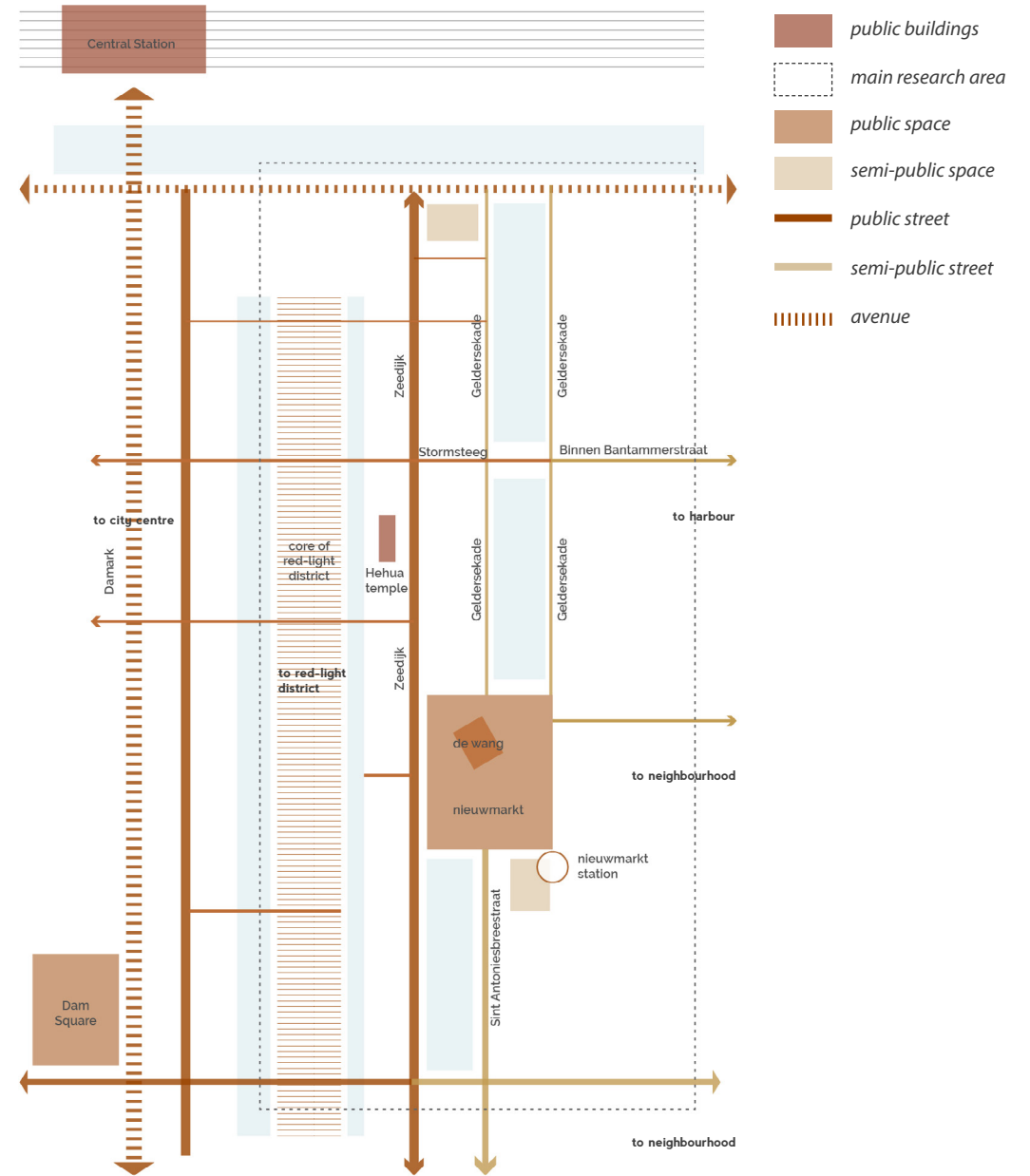


## Transitional area

urban relations: connect with the commercial and residential area



- public space
- socio-cultural building
- residential area
- commercial area

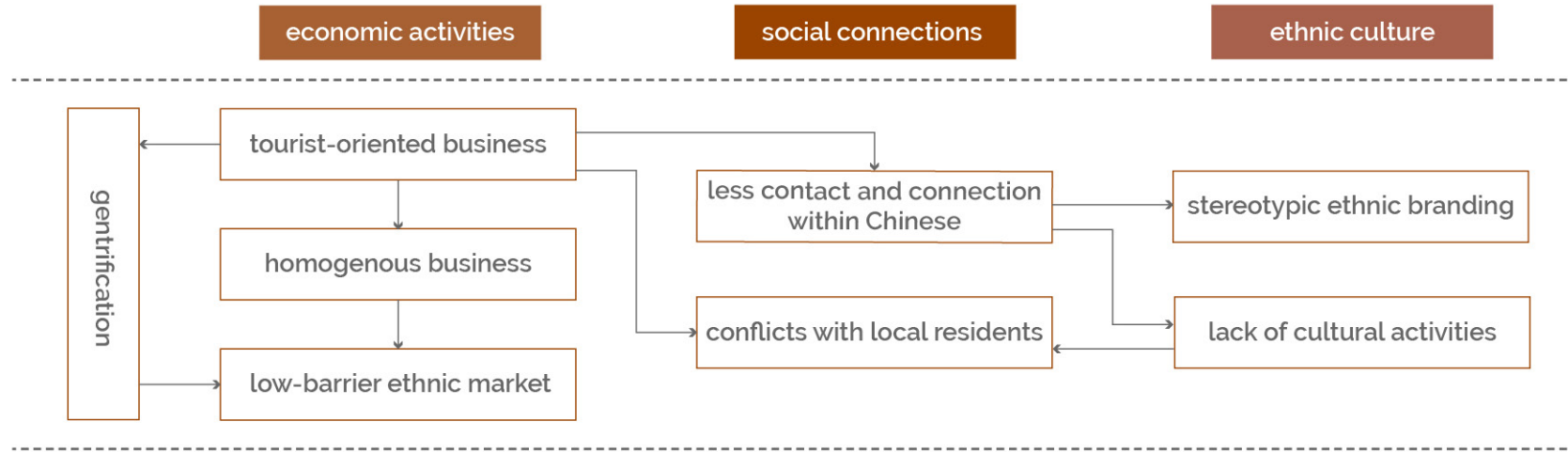


- public buildings
- main research area
- public space
- semi-public space
- public street
- semi-public street
- avenue

abstraction of space layer

# Problems

  
 problems of  
 Zeedijk as  
 Chinatown



proportion of each type of Chinese business in Zeedijk



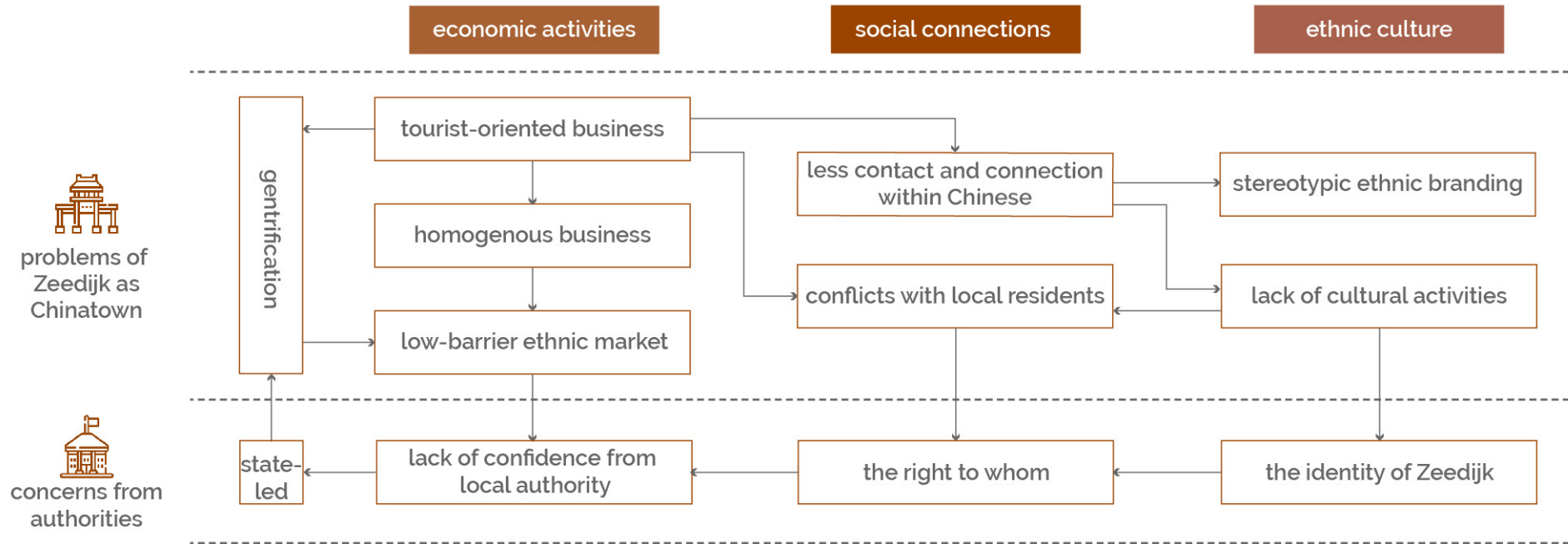
occupied by visitors



fragmented cultural delivery

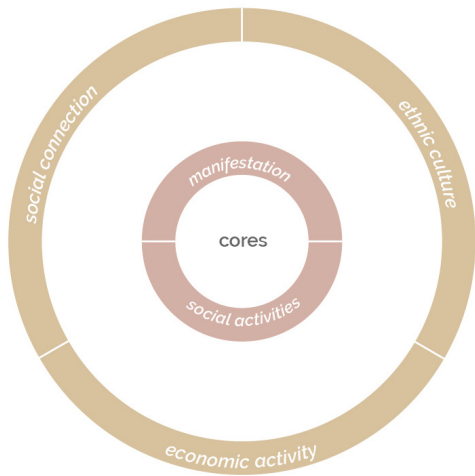
*a. including Zeedijk, Stormsteeg, Nieuwmarkt, Geldersekade, and Binnen Bamtammerstraat (store information collected from Tripadvisor)*

## Problems



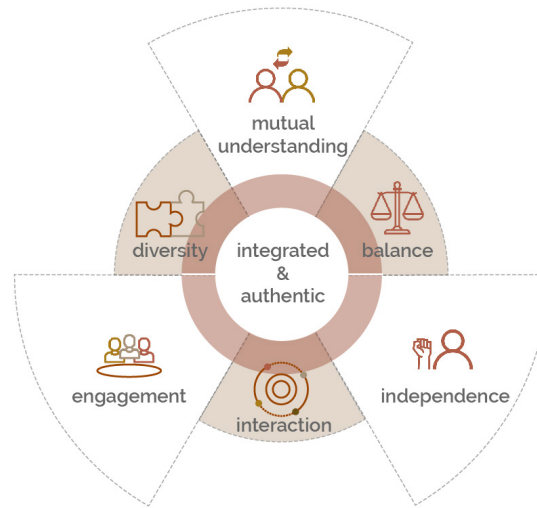


## Implication for theoretical studies



social and spatial dimensions

+



requirements  
(based on integration and  
authenticity concept)

overlap →



intervention of Chinatowns

## Socio-spatial strategies

### strategies for social connection

---

#### *Collective space*

To provide collective public space which could be used by diverse groups to create opportunities for unintended encounters.

#### *Flexible space*

To integrate different types of uses and remain flexible to accommodate values and preferences of different groups.

#### *Interactive streetscape*

For those public shopping streets with stores at ground-floor, to increase visual relationship between indoors and outdoors at the streetscape through setting up attractive and neatly windows display.

#### *Inclusive streetscape*

For those semi-public streets predominately with resident-oriented stores, to beautify the enclosed interface and allow street informality to a certain degree to increase the liveability.

#### *Training school*

To provide consultation service, language and training courses for Chinese entrepreneurs to improve their abilities and competitiveness.

### strategies for ethnic culture

---

#### *Cultural activities*

To organize events, activities and workshop to enable local residents, visitors and Chinese to celebrate diverse culture together, as well as to introduce more Chinese culture related activities.

#### *Public building for Chinese culture*

To provide room for Chinese which could exhibit ethnic culture as well as the integration process of Chinese population to the public.

#### *Maintain local characters*

To respect and maintain the local Dutch characters rather than eliminating local characters or overemphasis of Chinese characters.

#### *Integrated characters*

To explore common characters from Chinese and Dutch culture. After understanding deeply meanings behind, to introduce integrated characters with transnational identity to create the shared sense of belonging for both Chinese and local residents.

#### *Design guidelines*

To release design guideline for Zeedijk, so as to lead to the adoption of building renovation and streetscape standard, that could guide and help entrepreneurs and developers to enhance the transnational identity of Zeedijk.

### strategies for economic activities

---

#### *Balance users*

To balance the resident-oriented and tourist-oriented type of business, as well as the high-end and low-end business to ensure that most stores could be accepted by local residents.

#### *Enrich concept*

To encourage Chinese entrepreneurs and their business to collaborate with workshop to enrich the concept and attraction.

#### *Diverse target groups*

To provide service and goods for Chinese, local residents and tourists, business should not focus entirely or mainly on tourists.

#### *Various Chinese store*

To improve diversity of stores and re-distribute those homogeneous types of business. Through varied offers to attract creative and innovative Chinese entrepreneurs to open stores here.

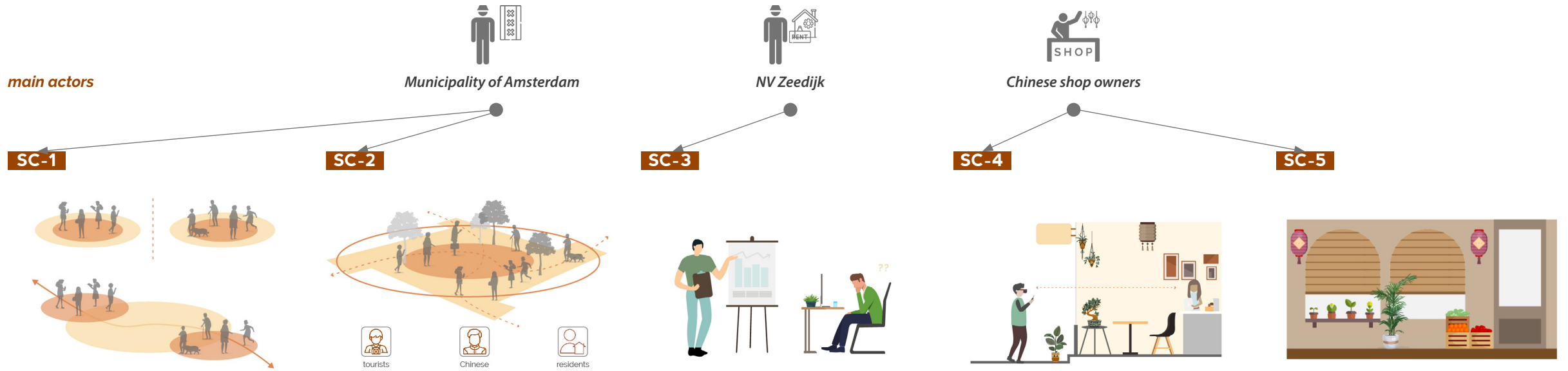
#### *Creative incubator*

To provide create incubator for Chinese artists and creative professionals around Zeedijk, so as to increase more opportunities to cooperate with entrepreneurs in depth, and then to promote the transformation of Chinatown.

#### *Optimize business*

To transform and optimize the business and develop the indispensability in the market by innovative concepts, rather than concentration of low-barrier catering industry with fierce competition.

## Strategies for social connection



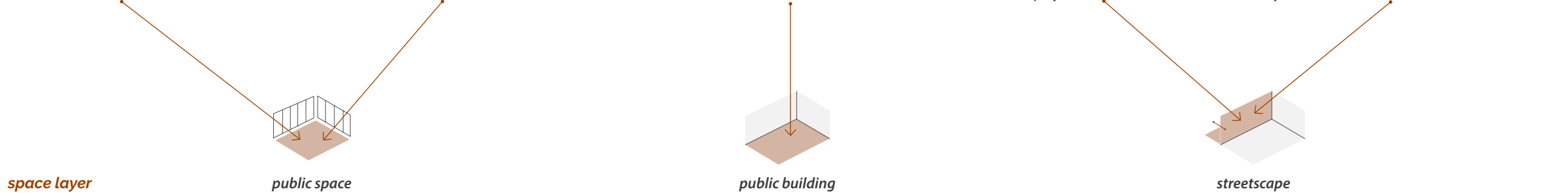
**Collective space**  
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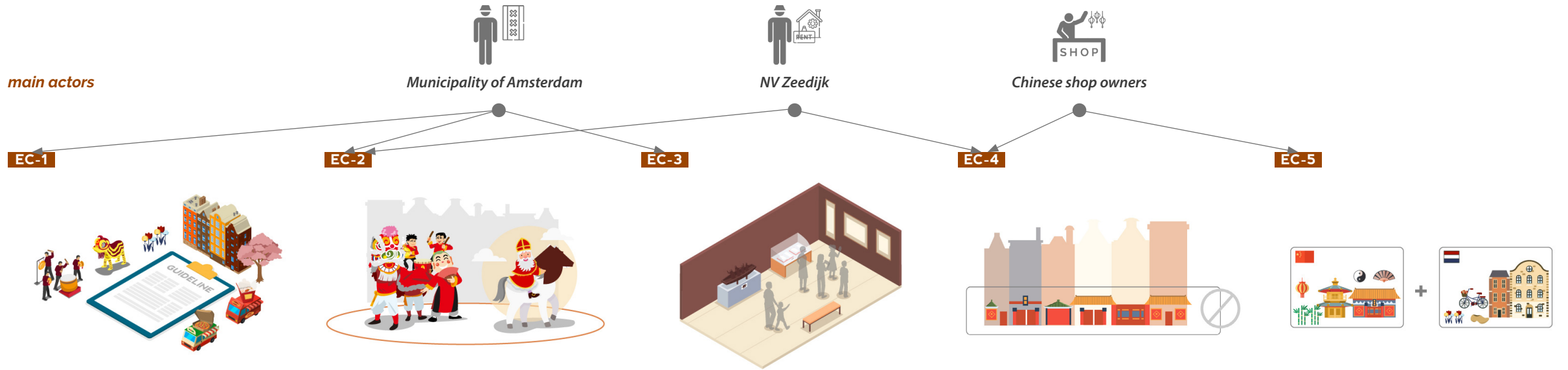
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## Strategies for ethnic culture



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### Cultural activities

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### Public building for Chinese culture

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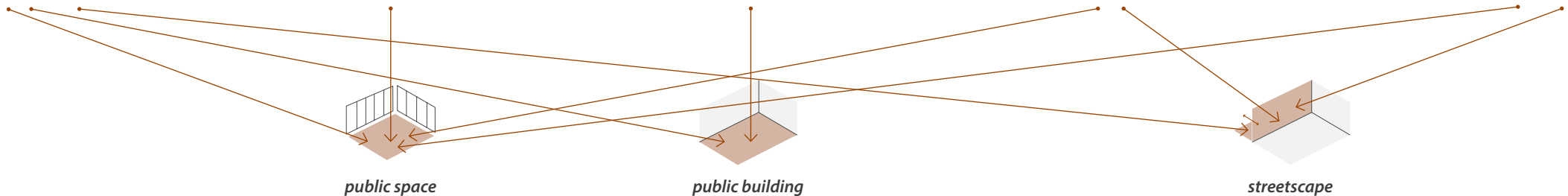
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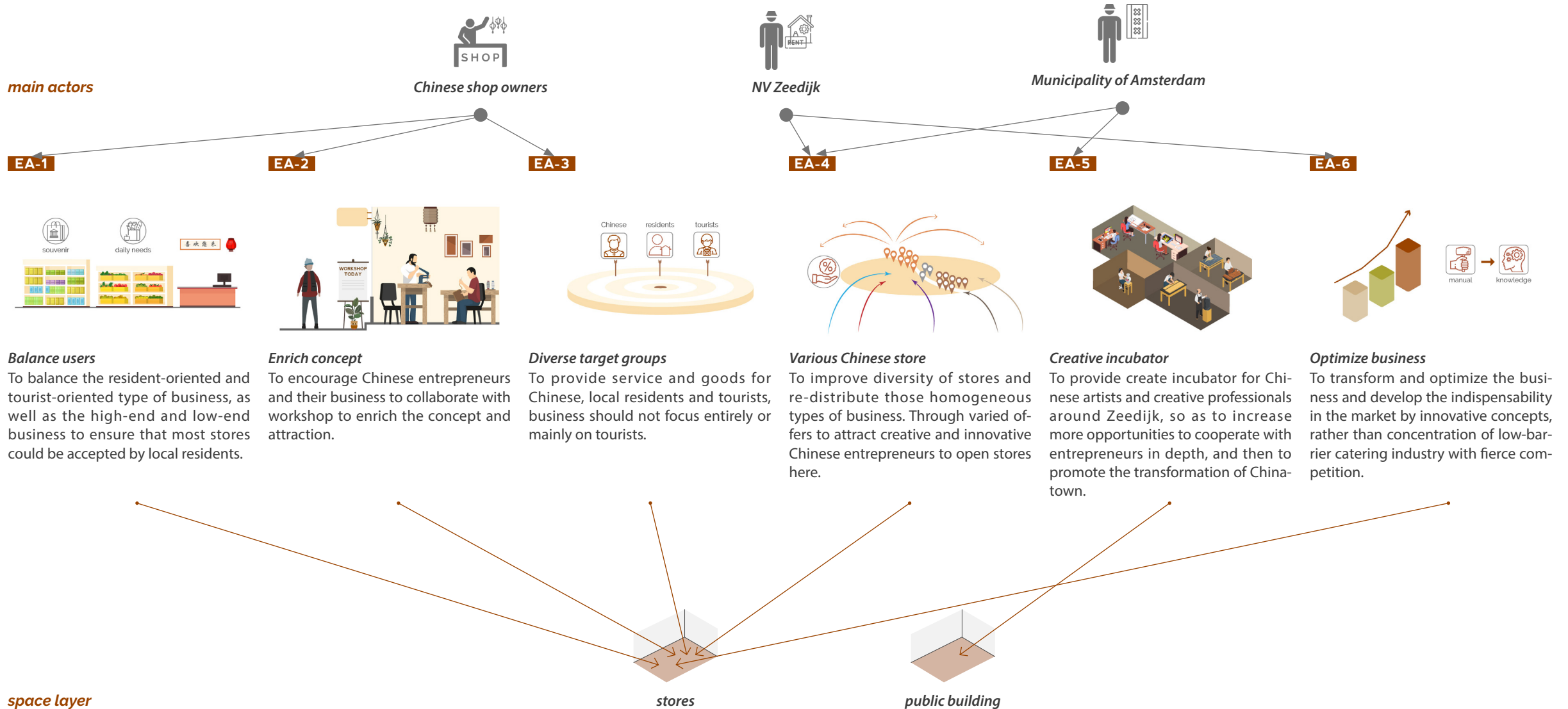
### Integrated characters

To explore common characters from Chinese and Dutch culture. After understanding deeply meanings behind, to introduce integrated characters with transnational identity to create the shared sense of belonging for both Chinese and local residents.

### space layer



## Strategies for economic activities



## Contextualised intervention: site 01



*selected site 01*



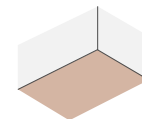
*site situation*



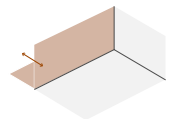
*the distinct Chinese streetscape*



*many Chinese restaurants (homogeneous)*

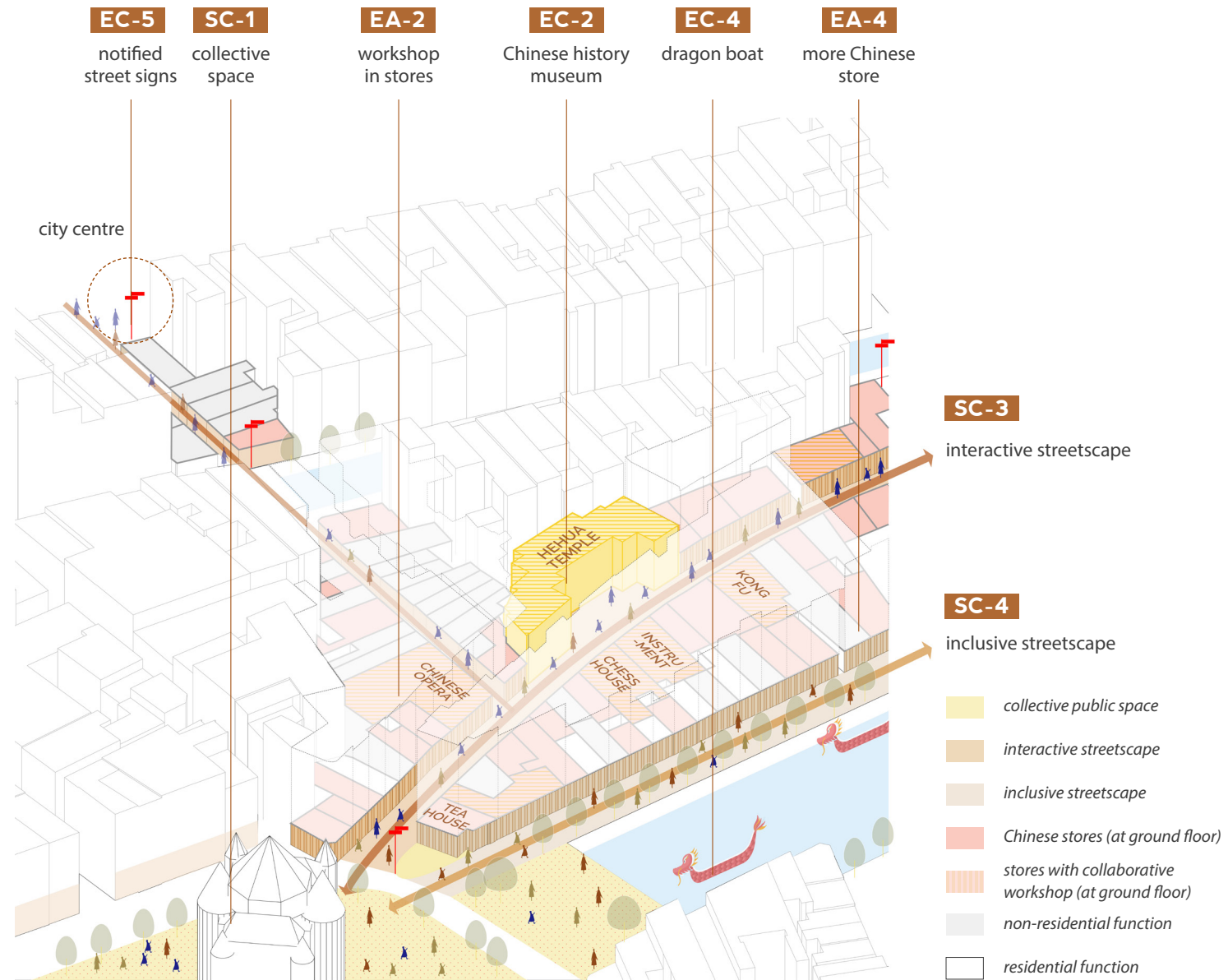


*stores*



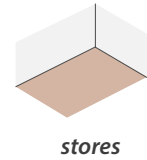
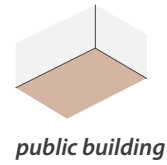
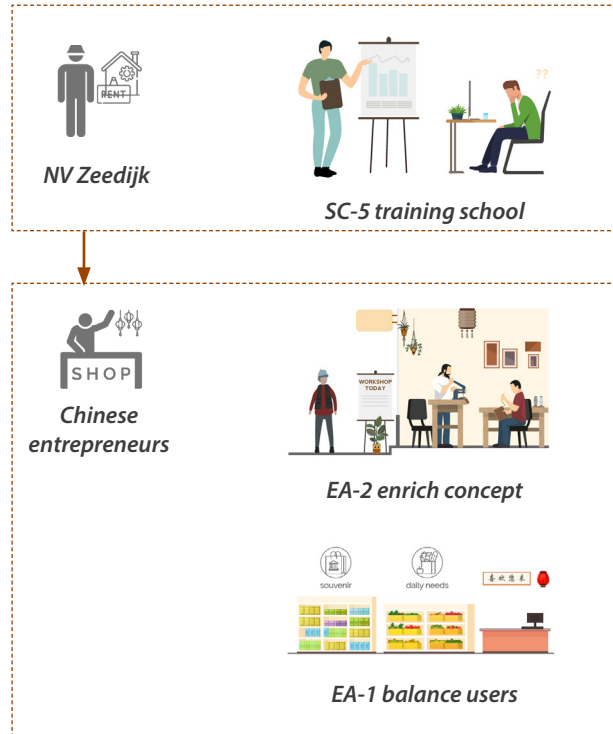
*streetscape*





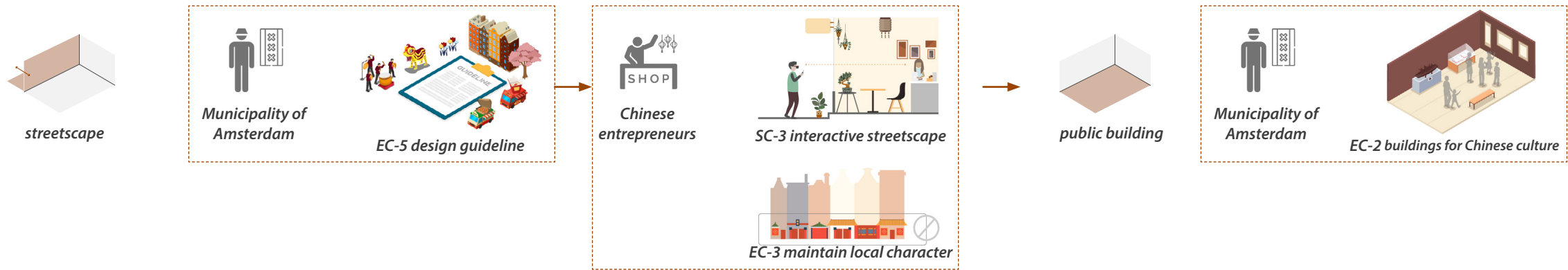
the axonometric diagram of proposed strategies intervention under particular conditions. (Author, 2020)

## Strategies implementation: restructure economic performance

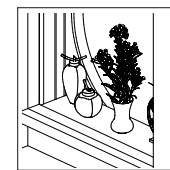


the diagram of the enriched experience and activities in existing Chinese stores. (Author, 2020)

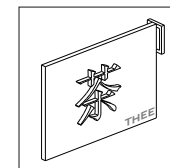
## Strategies implementation: transnational identity of physical settings



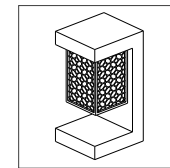
interactive streetscape



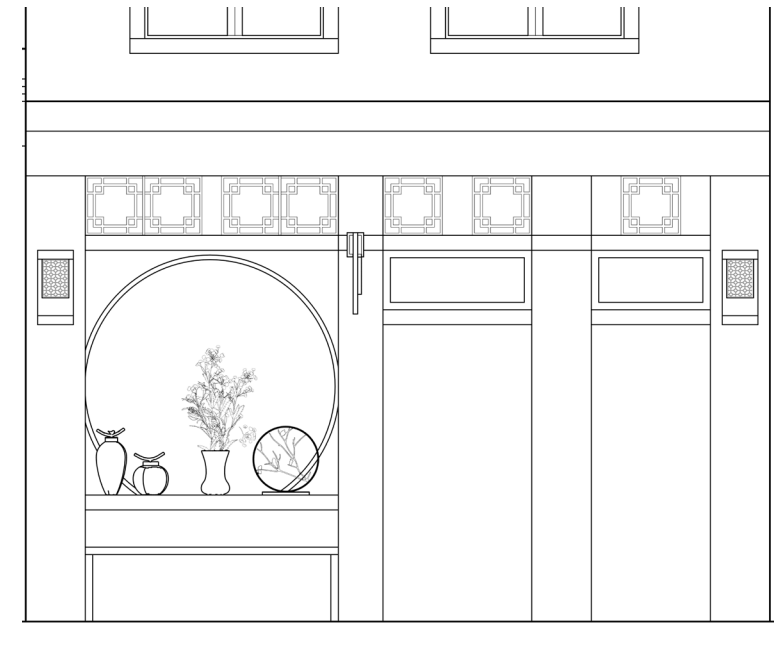
display cabinet beside windows



Chinese signboard



Wall lamps with Chinese elements



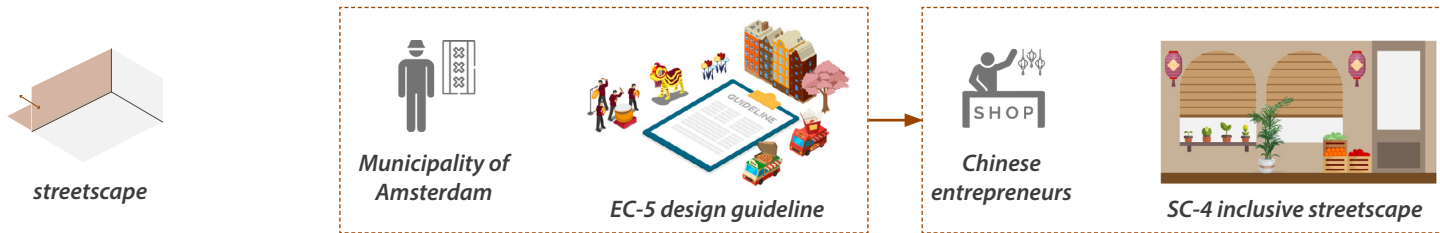
interactive window display of stores



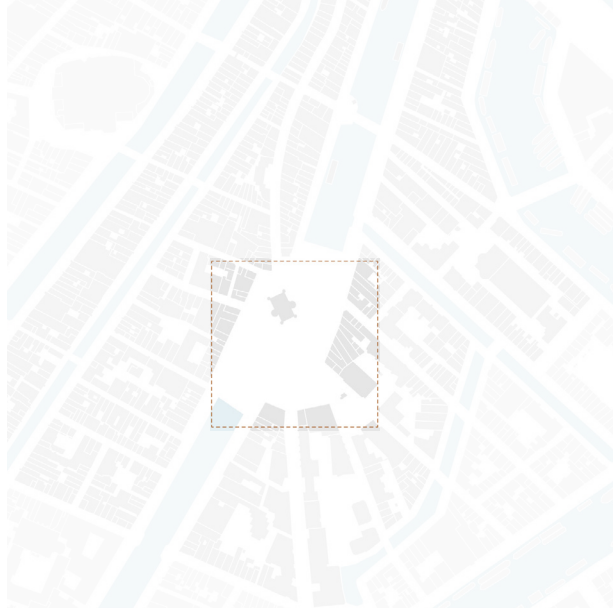




## Strategies implementation: inclusive physical settings



## Contextualised intervention: site 02



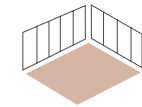
*selected site 02*








*site situation*



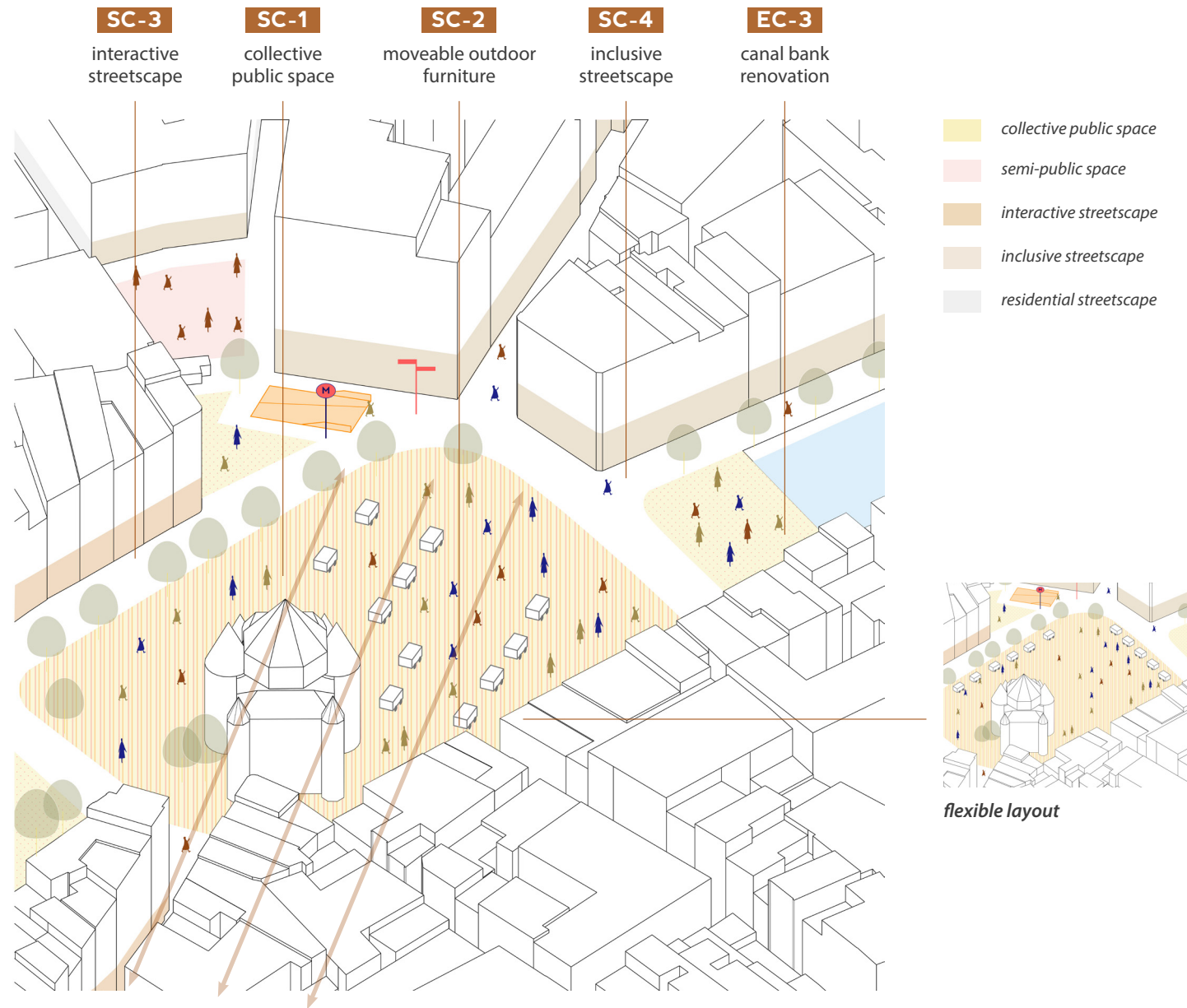
*seasonal city markets*



*public space*

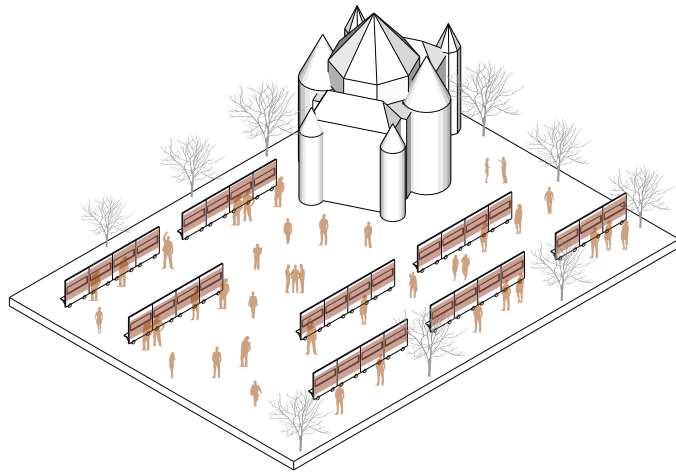
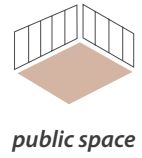
-  *public space*
-  *semi-public space*
-  *store*
-  *parking area*
-  *intensity of Chineseness*



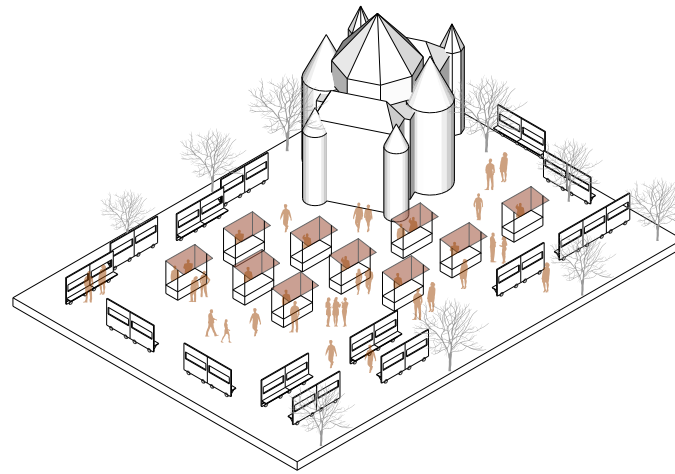


*the axonometric diagram of proposed strategies intervention under particular conditions. (Author, 2020)*

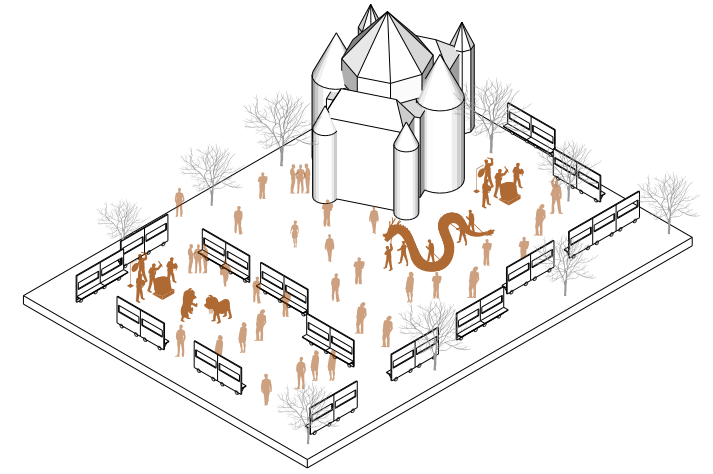
## Strategies implementation: the collective public space



exhibition

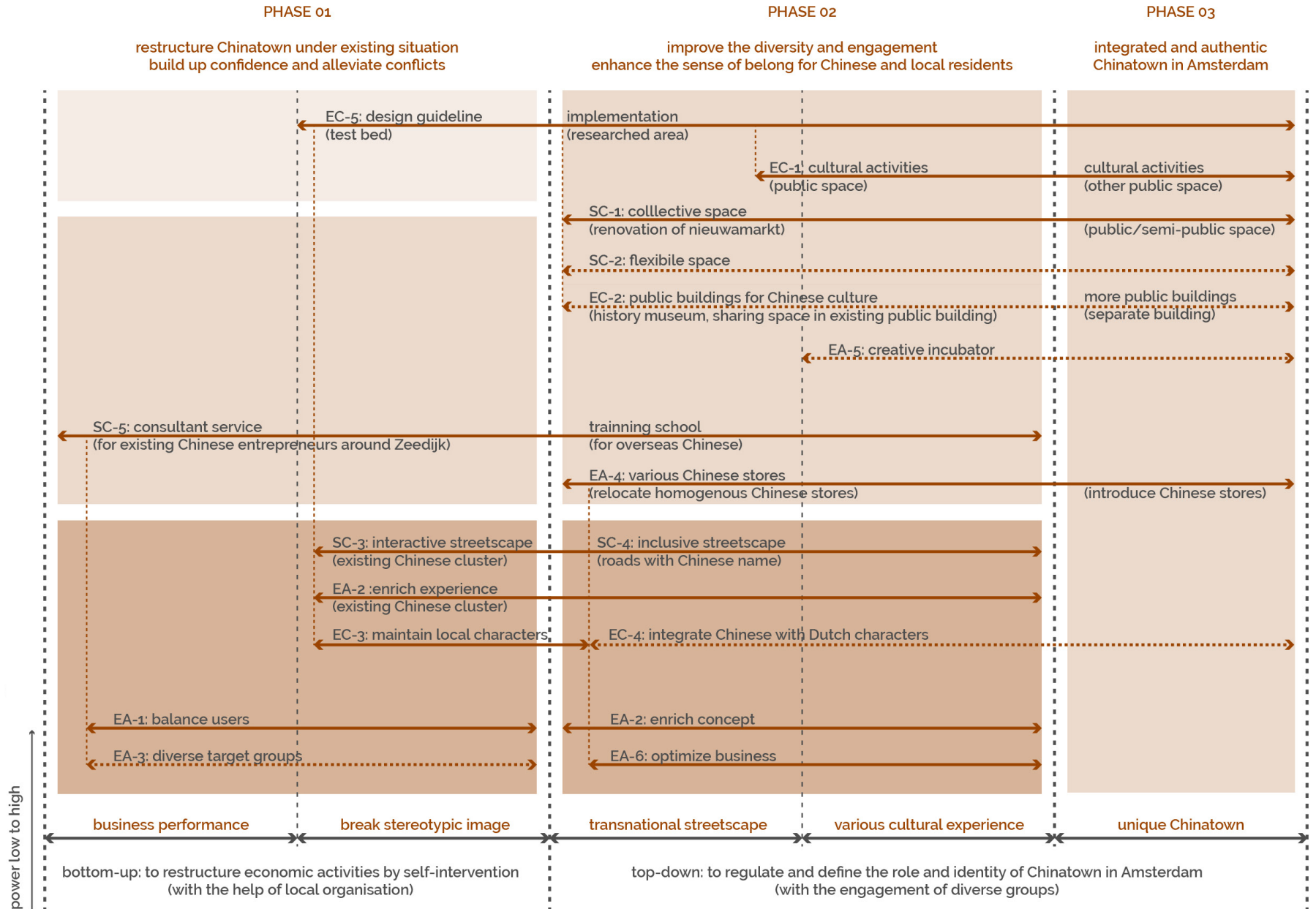


night fair



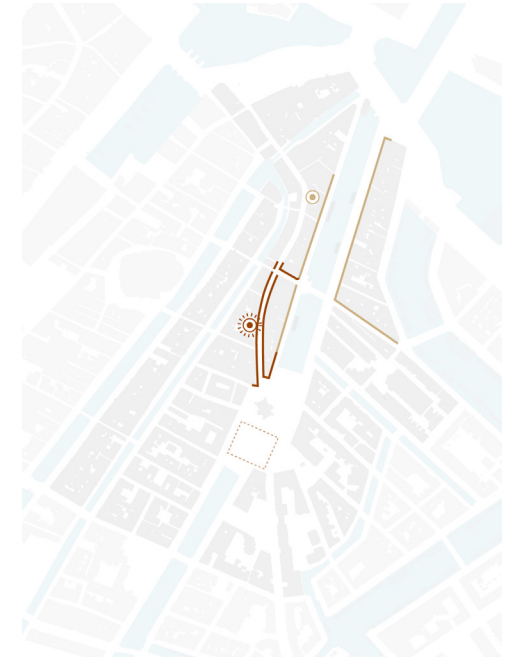
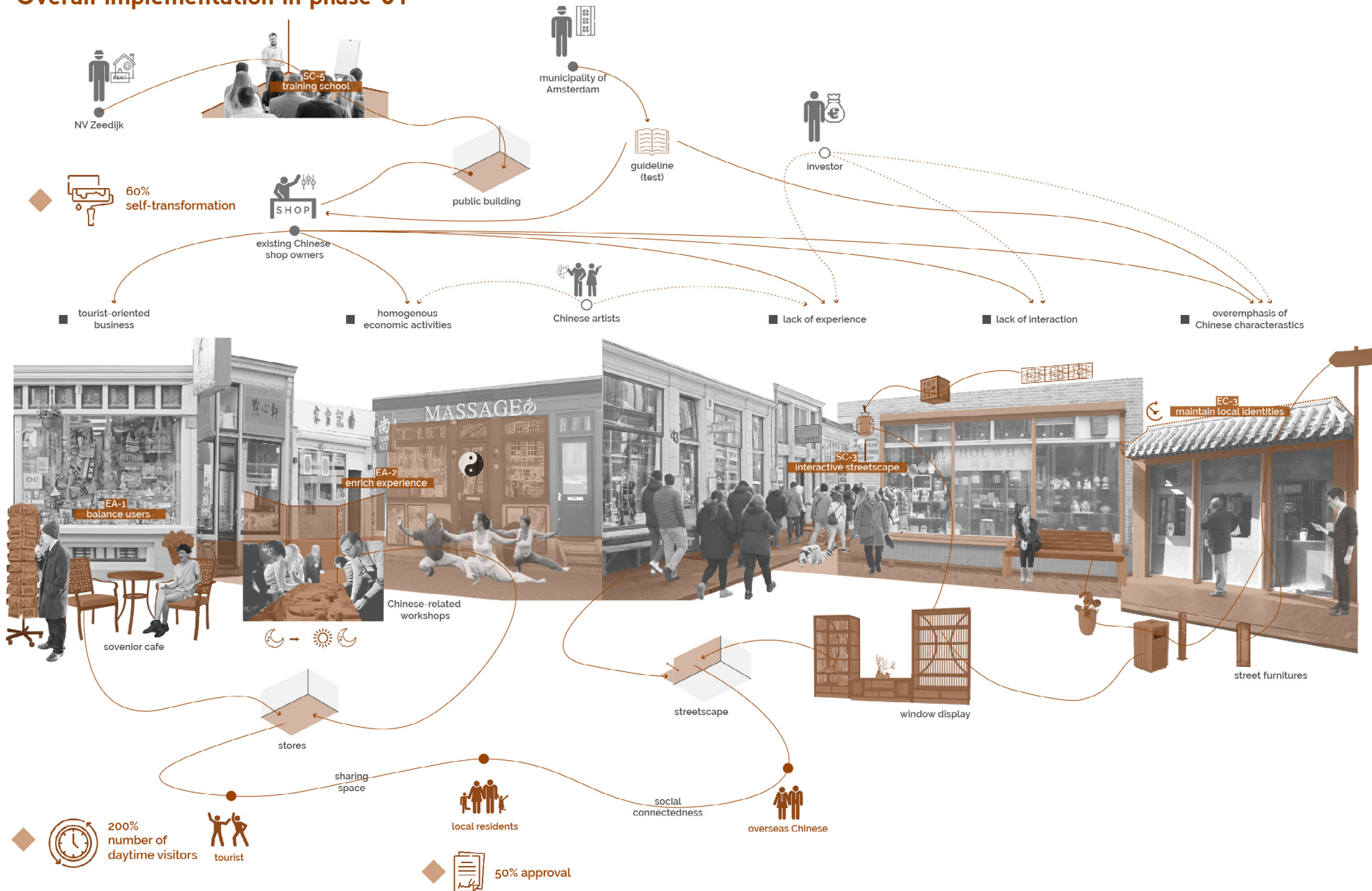
celebration

# Phasing intervention





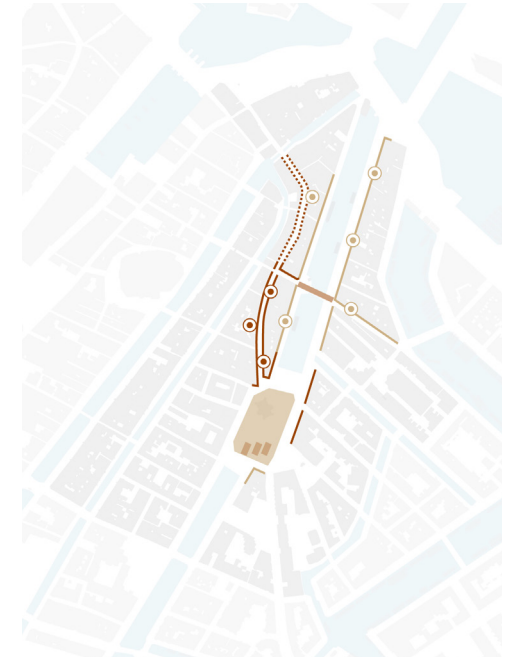
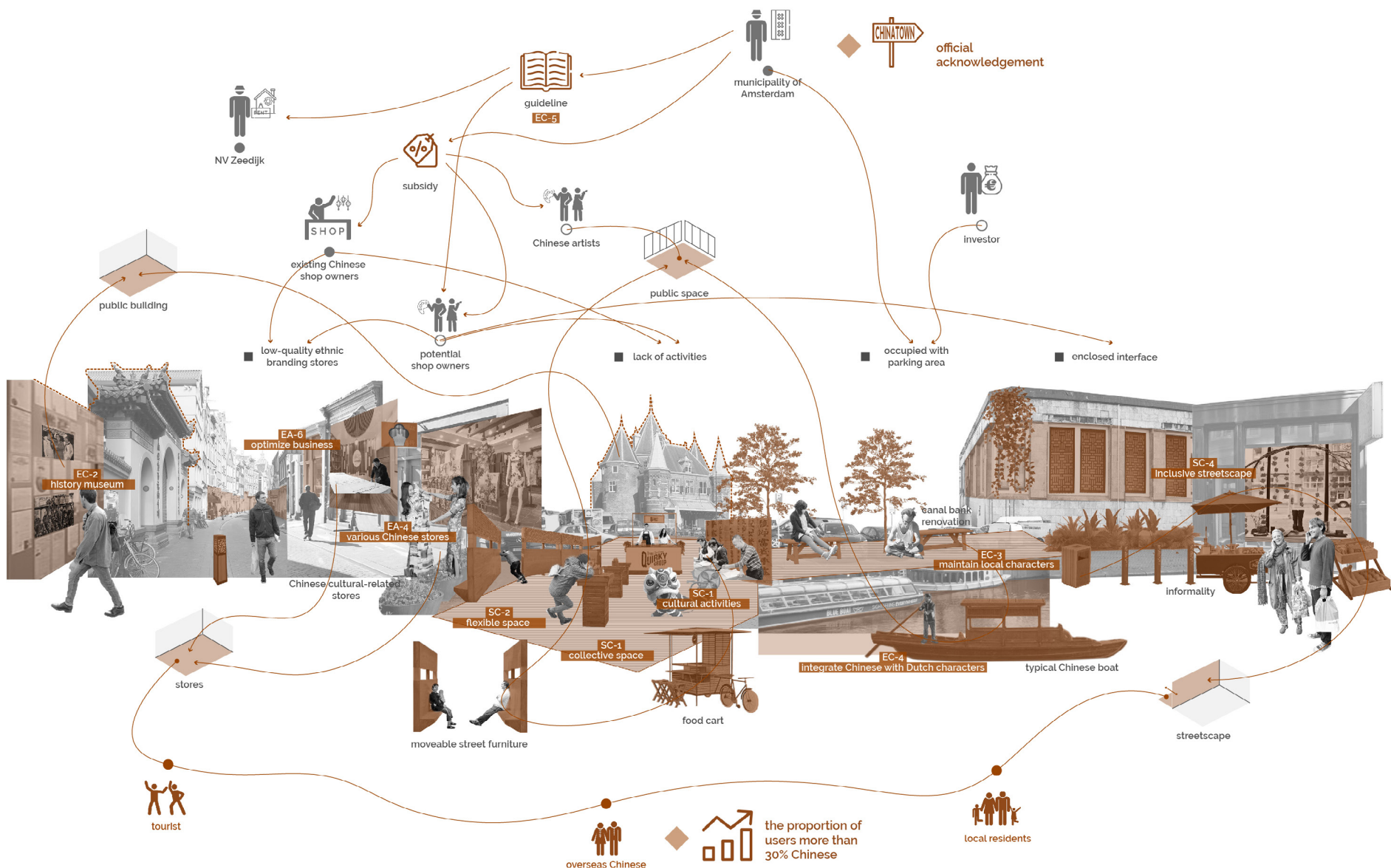
# Overall implementation in phase 01



intervention area

- problems
- main actors
- potential actors
- participants
- ◆ evaluation

# Overall implementation in phase 02



intervention area





*semi-public street*



*public street*



*public space*

1-training school 2-Chinese artist studio 3-dragon boat 4-street furniture with slightly Chinese elements 5-interactive window display 6-Chinese hand-craft workshop 7-moveable benches 8-Chinese food cart



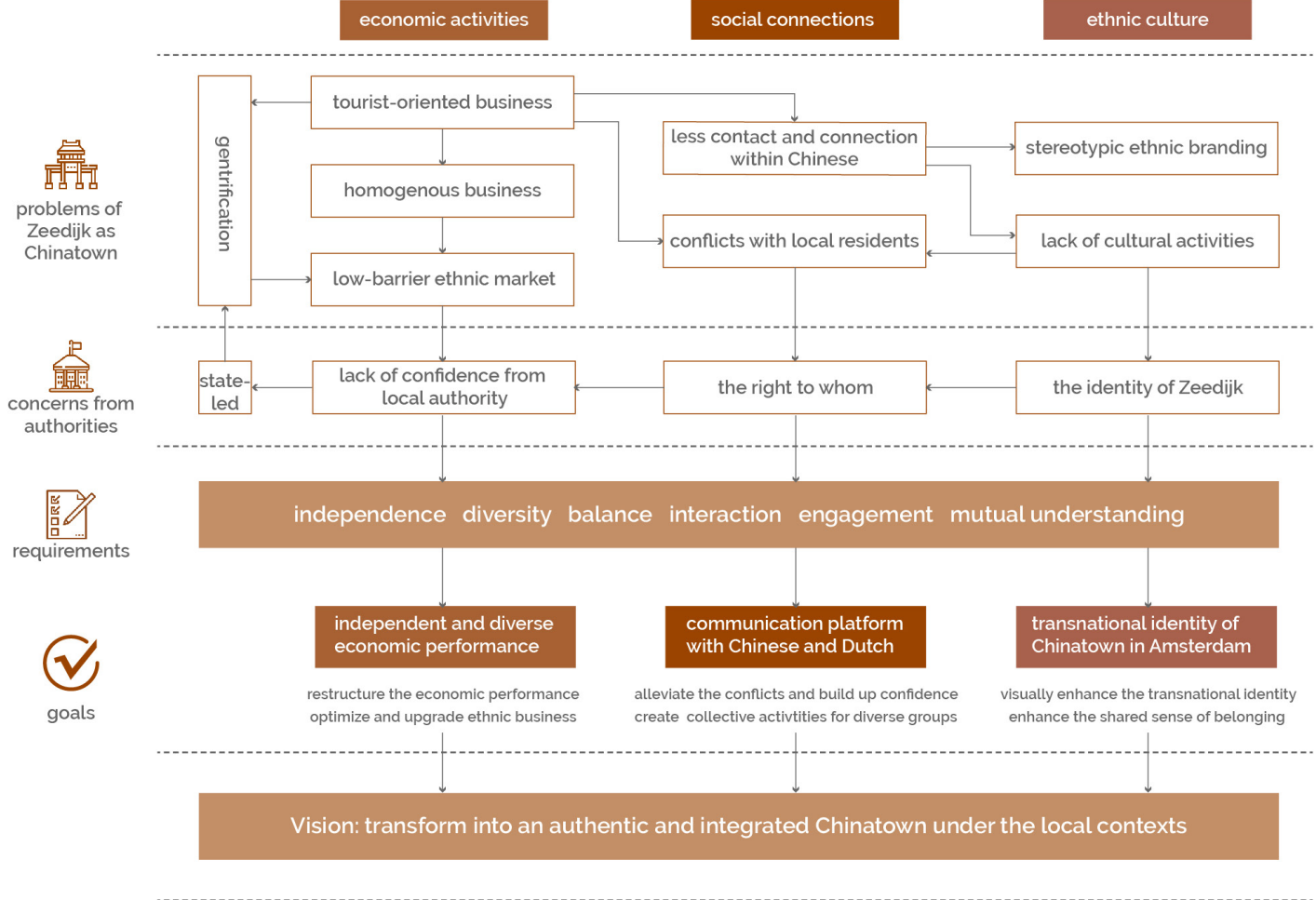
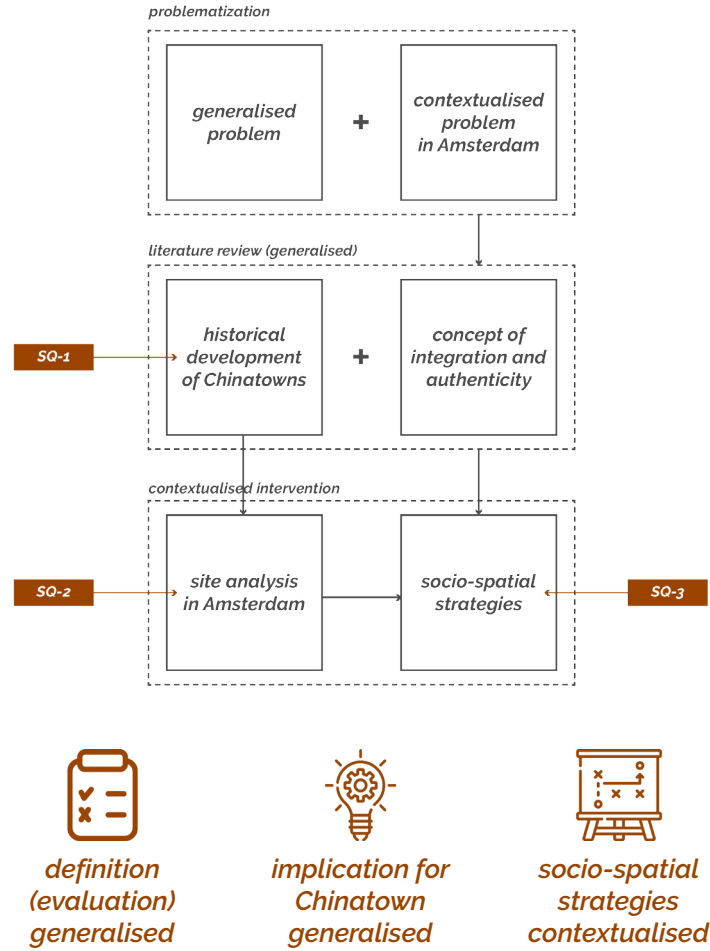




**04 Conclusion**



# Conclusion





## Transferability

### strategies for social connection

#### Collective space

To provide collective public space which could be used by diverse groups to create opportunities for unintended encounters.

#### Flexible space

To integrate different types of uses and remain flexible to accommodate values and preferences of different groups.

#### Interactive streetscape


For those public shopping streets with stores at ground-floor, to increase visual relationship between indoors and outdoors at the streetscape through setting up attractive and neatly windows display.


#### Inclusive streetscape

For those semi-public streets predominately with resident-oriented stores, to beautify the enclosed interface and allow street informality to a certain degree to increase the liveability.

#### Training school

To provide consultation service, language and training courses for Chinese entrepreneurs to improve their abilities and competitiveness.

 applicable for generalised Chinatowns

 applicable for Chinatowns under similar contexts (the Hague, or be selectively supported from local authorities)

### strategies for ethnic culture

#### Cultural activities

To organize events, activities and workshop to enable local residents, visitors and Chinese to celebrate diverse culture together, as well as to introduce more Chinese culture related activities.

#### Public building for Chinese culture

To provide room for Chinese culture which could exhibit ethnic culture as well as the integration process of Chinese population to the public.

#### Maintain local characters

To respect and maintain the local Dutch characters rather than eliminating local characters or overemphasis of Chinese characters.

#### Integrated characters

To explore common characters from Chinese and Dutch culture. After understanding deeply meanings behind, to introduce integrated characters with transnational identity to create the shared sense of belonging for both Chinese and local residents.

#### Design guidelines

To release design guideline for Zeedijk, so as to lead to the adoption of building renovation and streetscape standard, that could guide and help entrepreneurs and developers to enhance the transnational identity of Zeedijk.

### strategies for economic activities

#### Balance users

To balance the resident-oriented and tourist-oriented type of business, as well as the high-end and low-end business to ensure that most stores could be accepted by local residents.

#### Enrich concept

To encourage Chinese entrepreneurs and their business to collaborate with workshop to enrich the concept and attraction.

#### Diverse target groups

To provide service and goods for Chinese, local residents and tourists, business should not focus entirely or mainly on tourists.

#### Various Chinese store

To improve diversity of stores and re-distribute those homogeneous types of business. Through varied offers to attract creative and innovative Chinese entrepreneurs to open stores here.

#### Creative incubator

To provide create incubator for Chinese artists and creative professionals around Zeedijk, so as to increase more opportunities to cooperate with entrepreneurs in depth, and then to promote the transformation of Chinatown.

#### Optimize business

To transform and optimize the business and develop the indispensability in the market by innovative concepts, rather than concentration of low-barrier catering industry with fierce competition.

## Discussion

*A high-quality space for public use could enhance social capital (Putnam, 2000), as well as could enable people to feel comfortable and get into the 'social mood' (Svendsen, 2010).*



*co-existence*




*mutual understanding*


Google


Chinatown attack


Q All Images News Maps Videos More Settings Tools

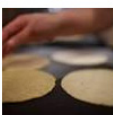
About 56.300 results (0,24 seconds)

 [Adelaide food delivery driver hit in 'racist' attack on Gouger ...](#)  
7NEWS.com.au - 5 Jul 2020  
Video taken on Saturday evening just off Gouger Street, near Chinatown, shows two men standing next to a delivery driver. See the incident in ...

 [Chinatown assault: Woman seriously injured, Vancouver ...](#)  
CTV News - 8 Jun 2020  
Chinatown assault: Woman seriously injured, Vancouver police say ... after a woman was injured in an incident in Vancouver's Chinatown early ...

 [Disturbing moment food delivery driver spits a TOOTH out ...](#)  
Daily Mail - 18 hours ago  
... face in 'unprovoked attack' - as angry Chinese-Aussies vow revenge ... teeth was knocked out on Gouger Street, near Adelaide's Chinatown, ...

 [Australia Racist Attack: Chinese-Australians Band Together to ...](#)  
International Business Times - 8 hours ago  
On Saturday (July 4), in Adelaide's Chinatown section, two men struck an Asian delivery rider perched upon his electric bike. The event ...

 [Mi Mero Mole owner blames city for closure of Old Town ...](#)  
oregonlive.com - 30 Jun 2020  
Mi Mero Mole, which relocated to Chinatown after its original location in ... the families of the victims of the MAX train attack by Jeremy Christian.



*globalisation*



*'voluntaristic'  
segregation*



**Thank you.**